Mao Tse-tung is impersonated for the first time. 536

4. Modern play (hua-chü) The modern play, like the motion picture, has no regional character. 536 545 Any acceptable play will be staged in all parts of China, and kuo-yü (the National Language) is used rather than the various dialects. Ch'en Ch'i-t'ung's Thousands of Rivers and Mountains proves that the Communists' Long March in the thirties is always "correct" material for dramatization. The Song of the Red Flags, concerned with production drives in a textile factory in North China, was a collective creation of three playwrights, written after they had agreed on the ideological significance of this type of play and had sketched out the plot under the "guidance" of Chou Yang, the Vice-minister of Cultural Affairs. The Song of the Red Flags was performed in Peking, Shanghai, Nanking, Chungking, Lan-chou and other big cities. In Shanghai alone, it had 159 performances, and some 125,000 people attended it.[20] If we take into account the fact that theater-going is now an organized social activity of the various mass organizations such as labor unions, the Women's Federation, the New Democratic Youth Corps, the Young Pioneers, and the study circles, the length of the run and the size of the audience do not accurately reflect the enthusiasm of the people but rather the effectiveness of the Communist organization for mass participation in the field of recreation.

5. Motion pictures Shanghai and Mukden are 546 now the centers of China's motion picture industry. The White-haired Girl, based on the same version as the opera, won the first prize among the thirty-eight entries at the Communist International Motion-Picture

20. Jen-min Hua-pao [People's Pictorial], Peking, July 1950.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

cadres in many different parts of China to stir up class struggles in villages. The vogue of yang-ko in the Central-South Region now seems to be over. The sophisticated cadres seem to prefer the new operas to yang-ko, and the Western forms of social dancing to yang-ko steps. 535

The Chinese Communists have always fostered any art form that would assist their revolution. In 1950, Hsien Hsing-hai's Production Canta (Sheng-ch'an ta-ho-ch'ang) was transformed into an operatic spectacle. The new song-and-dance version is divided into four scenes, celebrating the time of spring cultivation, seeding, harvest, and prosperity, to portray the rural working people's enthusiasm for production and their prosperity as a result of the Communist "liberation."[23] 535 545

The Central Dance Corps at Peking, sponsored by the government, recently gave a "Lion Dance," which is an adaptation of a traditional festival dance performed in North China during the lunar New Year season.[24] Another dace, "Tea and Butterflies," has also been widely publicized; it concerns tea-gathering maidens in Western Fukien.[25] The purpose of these dances is to "beautify the working spirit" and to set a pattern to be developed by dance corps elsewhere in China. 535

The Cultural Corps (Wen-kung T'uan) of Central Institute of Nationalities at Peking has

23. People's Pictorial, August 1950.
24. Ibid., March 1954.
25. Ibid., April 1954.

2:Shryock H-4, 5 (no date)1931 AF14 Central China AF14

not on exhibition. This poverty is largely due to the T'aip'ings. However, there are in places stone tablets carved with inscriptions which are of some value historically. They are usually placed against the walls of the courtyards.

An interesting question which I have never seen discussed is the relation of the theater to religion in China. Four temples in Anking, those of the Tung Yo, the Fire God and the Fu and Hsien City-Gods, have stages over the entrance, facing the main hall across a courtyard. Plays were formerly given there at the New Year and the birthday of the god, but the custom seems to have died out or been forbidden by the officials because of the disorder it created. These plays were not religious, though gods sometimes appeared among the dramatis personae. I do not believe that there are any extant plays with a religious purpose. The ordinary explanation is that the plays were given in honor of the god, that he might enjoy them as any spectator would, and be amused, but this is superficial, of course. How did these plays come to be connected with religion, not only in the temples, but in the trade and provincial gilds? Why do some temples have them and others not? Why is a theatrical performance part of the harvest festival in the country, and why are prayers offered before the play? Such questions will probably await a closer study of the T'ang, Sung and Yuen Dynasties, when so many new ideas were introduced into China.

The images of the better known gods may be identified in various ways, which I will try to describe in considering them individually. They differ in posture, dress, sex, facial expression, color, the implements they bear, their position in the temple, their attendants, occupation, and in other ways. Some would be hard to make sure of if taken from their temples. However, in all but Buddhist temples, and sometimes even there, the gods have their names written on tablets, much like those in ancestral halls, which are placed before their images. Occasionally pictures take the place of images on the altar. I have never seen the image of an animal in a Chinese temple, though the Chinese have " Fox Temples ", and a few images have animal faces, and I understand that temples in the province of Kuantung have animal images.